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FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

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INFO RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUCNFUR/DARFUR COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUCNIAD/IGAD COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RHMFISS/CJTF HOA PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 000431

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR AF A A/S CARTER, SE GRATION, AF/SPG, AF/C,  
NSC FOR MGAVIN AND CHUDSON,  
ADDIS ABABA PLEASE PASS TO USAU

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TAGS: PGOV PREL SOCI AU UN SU

SUBJECT: "SUDAN IS DIFFERENT NOW AND YOUR POLICY MUST BE  
DIFFERENT," WARNS PRESIDENTIAL ADVISOR

REF: A. KHARTOUM 427

1B. KHARTOUM 358

Classified By: CDA Alberto M. Fernandez, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Presidential Advisor Ali Abdallah Masar, the most senior Darfuri Arab in the Sudanese regime, met CDA Fernandez on March 26 to suggest that, after the March 4 ICC arrest warrant for President Bashir "Sudan is a different place now" requiring a different American approach to the Khartoum regime and to President Bashir. "The President is stronger than before and everyone has fallen in line behind him, whatever their personal views may be." He said that an American policy based on diktat and threats "all sticks and no carrots," is not going to work. It didn't work before and is less likely to work now. "We are not like those client Arab regimes who fall in line and quake at the slightest perception of American anger". Sudan respects America's power and knows that America could hurt Sudan, especially militarily, but "we are ready to live and die in the rubble of our cities if needed."

12. (C) CDA responded that the United States has a realistic view of Sudan and of the existing power structure and are ready to deal with it to safeguard our interests. We have for many years sought change in regime behavior rather than regime change, but while some things have improved (such as cooperation on UNAMID deployment) many other issues of importance to the U.S. have either limped along or deteriorated. CPA implement proceeds glacially while humanitarian access in Darfur has deteriorated with the recent expulsions. Masar jovially but pointedly retorted on the NGO expulsions, "so we expelled them, so what? We are a sovereign country and can decide who works here and who doesn't. Your friends in Ethiopia do the same thing all the time and you never complain." Masar noted that with dozens (about 70 actually) remaining INGOs in Darfur, the USG could switch its support and funding to other INGOs acceptable to both Sudan and the West. CDA noted that it was not so simple and even with the remaining NGOs, a climate of fear and uncertainty had been created by the regime's actions - not just what they did but how it was done: theft, intimidation and brutality. Masar deplored such actions but said that "you can't blame the government and its policies for the actions of some bad apples, isn't that what happened in Abu Ghuraib?"

13. (C) Masar, who was one of the intellectual founders of the Arab supremacist teachings which led to the depredations of the janjaweed in Darfur, suggested that "an approach based on mutual respect, listening, on a more intense dialogue" could make progress. "You know that yourself because that is why Sudanese like you, but your government hasn't wanted to act

that way." He welcomed the naming of Scott Gration as the new Special Envoy and noted "this could lead to a big success with President Bashir, if he is the right type of general." But the U.S. should understand that the price of progress always goes up as Sudan makes concessions and America doesn't respond." Still, if there is American flexibility and creativity, "you could solve all the problems of Sudan quickly if you are smart."

¶4. (C) Masar suggested that "if the NGO issue is so important for you, a deal could certainly be made" with greater access for NGOs in return for an American abstention on an ICC Article 16 at the UN Security Council. CDA interrupted Masar noting that "we feel that the NGO expulsion should never have happened in the first place," and while the US is indeed interested in dialogue and creative ways at improving relations, CDA was not in a position to offer any sort of deal or even hint at such a possibility. Sudan had made commitments on humanitarian access in March 2007 which had slowly been subverted by the regime, "we would like to see the many promises you have already made and haven't kept be fulfilled, including on CPA and DPA, before we talk about new deals."

¶5. (C) Switching to Darfur, Masar warned about the dangers of a narrow, brittle deal with one rebel movement, as happened in Abuja in 2006 with Minni Minnawi. CDA agreed and noted that the involvement of a wider range of Darfuri voices, aside from the Zaghawa led rebel groups, must somehow be engineered. We recognized that the Fur must be involved and the Arab tribes of Darfur also have equities that need to be addressed. Masar extolled exiled former Darfur Governor

KHARTOUM 00000431 002 OF 002

Tijani Sese, a Fur and former Umma Party activist, as the best alternative to the paranoid and stubborn Abdul Wahid Nur in Paris, "if Tijani is acceptable to you, you can build him up and make him an alternative to Abdul Wahid, especially in the IDP camps."

¶6. (C) On Darfur's Arab tribes, Masar noted that the worse violence in Darfur, in terms of mass casualties, in 2007 and 2008 was fighting between pro-regime Arab tribes (who were heavily armed by Khartoum) and not African tribes or IDPs against the Government as had happened in 2003-2006. There was a need for reconciliation between the Arab tribes and between them and the African tribes. CDA agreed and noted that America has nothing against the Arab tribes of Darfur and that he himself has reached out dozens of time to them. "Yes you have," noted Masar, "but your government has not". CDA responded that this is something that we are working on. Masar offered to provide lists of credible Darfur Arab leaders "who have clean hands," not like his tribal colleagues Musa Hilal or Abdullah Safi el Nur, for further engagement.

¶7. (C) Comment: Although a sleazy politician rather than a stone cold killer like Hilal (who himself is merely a tool of the NCP in Khartoum), Masar does make a good point about the psychological dimension of Sudanese politics. Personal relationships, appearances, language, the grand gesture, the personal touch, all are extremely important in a proud Sudanese society and particularly with Bashir himself. This is one key to Sudan repeatedly ignored by past American policymakers. While this element of the discussion is true and useful, there was also a strong element of bluff and humbug in Masar's comments. Certainly a brave front was presented, but the regime is also under unprecedented political and economic pressure, even if the ICC has brought about a transitory rallying around the President by the regime's ruling elite. End comment.

FERNANDEZ